

A
C O M P A N I O N 3.
FOR THE 4
S A B B A T H;
CONTAINING
R U L E S
FOR
HEARING THE WORD OF GOD
WITH
CERTAIN AND SAVING BENEFIT.

DEDICATED TO THE
INHABITANTS OF TADLEY, IN HAMPSHIRE.

THE SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED.

BY J O H N D U N C A N. 4

*Keep thy Foot when thou goest into the House of God; and be more
ready to HEAR, than to give the Sacrifice of Fools. Solomon.
HEAR, and your Souls shall live. Isaiah.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. MACGOWAN, Pater-noster-Row.

PRICE THREE - PENCE.

Where may be had, The COMPANION for the CLOSET.

TO THE
READER.

THE School was begun in February 1779; and consists of twelve Children, the Expence of which is discharged by the chearful Contributions of many Friends both in Town and Country, also from the Sale of the first Edition of this Pamphlet, which indeed was very far beyond expectation.

I therefore embrace this Opportunity of returning my most grateful Thanks to the Purchasers of it (in its very imperfect State), many of which doubled the Price ten Times over! viewing the End it was designed to answer. May the dear Lord return them a Thousand-fold into their own Bosom; I can assure them they have an Interest in many Prayers by the poor Parents—and their much obliged Friend, and Servant in the Gospel.

J. DUNCAN.

TADLEY, April 20, 1780.





P R E F A C E.

THE candid Reader is desired not to criticize too severely on the following Pages, till he is acquainted with my reasons for publishing them: then possibly his Candour will pass over their numerous blemishes.

*Providentially placed in an obscure village, where the Lord has of late stirred up many ignorant persons to hear his word, I judged the following rules * would be of some advantage.*

The inhabitants of this place in general are poor even to a proverb: I am firmly persuaded they can vie with the inhabitants of the most remote and destitute spot in England for poverty. Many families know not the Letter of a book. It is also observed by many, that the place is uncommonly prolific, which renders it impossible for their poor parents, even to provide a sufficiency of bread, and not half a sufficiency of cloathing for

** The substance of these rules I found in manuscript among the papers of a deceased Clergyman—They are dated in the year 1690. But I have made such alterations and additions as I judged proper.*

their children, consequently no degree of education is attainable—nor indeed is any looked after; especially where the value of an immortal soul is not known.

For my own part, I am too near a-kin to them, with respect to my circumstances in life, to be of much assistance to them in the education of their children: the little profit that may arise from the sale of this small publication, shall be applied to that purpose. But as that can be but very small (if any) I would earnestly intreat you who love the Saviour of your precious souls—see and feel a peculiar sweetness in reading and meditating his written word; that you would express your love to Jesus—your pity to the immortal souls of your fellow creatures, by contributing something for forwarding this design, without which it cannot be put into execution.

It may be depended on, whoever of my valuable acquaintance, and others, shall assist in the education of these poor creatures; a true account shall be kept both of the donor and donation, and faithfully applied to the most proper objects. Reading only is intended for them at present; indeed, my expectations cannot rise to more—I pray God I may not be disappointed even in that.

I am also situated in the neighbourhood of several Roman Catholic Chapels: and though Parliament has (to the astonishment of well nigh the whole kingdom) thought good of late to extend their religious privileges, there is not a view we can take of that bloody sect, but their conduct in every age, in every kingdom, both civil and religious,
leaves

leaves us something to fear. Former times afford us striking instances of their diligence to compass sea and land, to gain over the ignorant to their idolatrous and soul-destroying sentiments. This too I might urge as a motive to induce every lover of reformation principles, to be more concerned in the education of youth (I mean the poor) because more danger seems to surround them: let us put a Bible in their hands, and teach them to make use of it—commit them to God, and we have done. Whether we succeed or not in our endeavours, God will remember us for good another day.

Just Published, Price Two-pence,

THE SECOND EDITION of

A

C O M P A N I O N

FOR THE

C L O S E T:

CONTAINING THE FOLLOWING PARTICULARS, viz.

- I. Several Important Questions.
- II. Practical Observations.
- III. A Description of the Covenant of Grace.
- IV. The Faithfulness of God to that Covenant.
- V. Some eminent Relations which subsist between Christ and real Believers.
- VI. Family Rules.
- VII. A Regulator for the Affections.

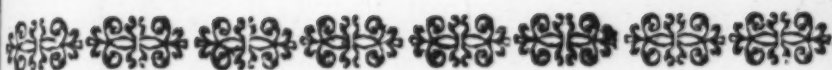
WITH A

D E D I C A T I O N

TO THE

PIOUS YOUTH of every DENOMINATION

THROUGHOUT THIS KINGDOM.



TO THE

Inhabitants of Tadley :

ESPECIALLY

Those who attend MY MINISTRY.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

BEING some time past confined to my chamber by an afflictive Providence, the next day after my confinement, I began to think how I could occupy my spare moments from pain, during my illness, so as to profit you in that which respects the One Thing Needful.

Your state, (as to religion) who form by far the greatest part of my congregation, soon resolved me what subject to present you with ; many of you have heretofore been entire strangers to even the very theory of religion, and your practice has been an evident demonstration of this awful truth. Others have had no more regard for the word of the living God, than for a common newspaper—were as ignorant and thoughtless of the present condition or future state of your precious souls, as the beasts that perish. Consequently you never bowed your knee to the Majesty of Heaven, except at those particular parts of the public church service which custom taught you—

not a painful sense of the load and guilt of your many and aggravated sins against the God that made you. This being the case, your attention to the sermons delivered from time to time (supposing you had attended) must have been very indifferent, and your judgment of doctrines very superficial.

However, of late the good God in great mercy to your precious souls, has been pleased to incline many of you to hear, and constantly attend my ministry; for sure I am, neither flattery, eloquence, nor railing against any sect or denomination enticed you to hear me, nor detained you when you came; no, for I have faithfully declared unto you the pure, unmixed gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to that knowledge and experience which I have received of God. Indeed I could be under no temptation to smooth you over with the glosses of man, with a view to interest myself in your affections for your riches: nor on the other hand, has your poverty lessened the value of your immortal souls in my esteem, but unto all I have endeavoured to shew with the greatest plainness, your fallen, ruined condition by nature—what strangers you are to the *power, justice, love, mercy and religion* of the adorable Jesus: and in consequence of which you lay exposed to the greatest woe that either the tongues of men or angels can express—that you are under the wrath and curse of God—are already condemned by the righteous law of Heaven; that there is nothing but the brittle thread of life between you and that fire which never can be quenched—out of which there is no redemption. I have proved to you over and over, that you can by no means *help yourselves* out of your awful condition; being destitute of either will, power, or solid resolution of returning unto God. Nor have I (yourselves being witnesses) left you to mourning, hopeless despair; but have shewn you the wonderful love of God in the rich provision he has made for lost souls from all eternity, well ordered and sure.
ratified

ratified and settled in the covenant of grace, between the Father and the Son. Where first you may view the goodness of God in giving his Son to die for us—and secondly the unparalleled love and faithfulness of Christ in fulfilling every article of that covenant—such as his coming into the world in our nature, taking our iniquities upon himself—bearing our enormous load of sin—suffering the wrath and curse of God for us—which would otherwise have crushed both our souls and bodies into hell. I have also shewn you the great security and comfort of those persons who are interested in this covenant, and presented it to you as a matter of your greatest comfort and rejoicing, especially to the tempted and distressed*.

I have

* May not the covenant of grace be elucidated thus? As in an indenture or lease, which is properly a covenant, every thing is there mentioned, covenanted, or agreed: and also the name of every *Man, Woman* and *Child*, that is to have any concern, or to derive any advantage from such an agreement or covenant, is particularly set down, and the tenor of this covenant or writing extends to them, as to their condition and state mentioned therein, as well as to what was intended for them at some future period.

So also with respect to the covenant of grace. See *Isaiab* xlii. 6. Christ is there said to be the covenant of, or for the people; i. e. the Mediator and Ratifier of the covenant. Now as those persons who covenant or agree, have each of them a copy of their covenant in his own possession for satisfaction and security; so as Christ is in Heaven with God the Father, there is the original copy: now read *Heb.* xii. 23. and you shall find that the names of the invisible church are there (i. e. in the covenant) inrolled---“The church of the first born which are written in Heaven.” There, in that writing or covenant, are all the names that ever were, are, or shall be visibly taken into the bond of this covenant. See *Eph.* i. 4. He (God the Father) hath chosen us in him (i. e. Christ) before the foundation of the world. Hear now what Christ the Mediator says of this agreement; “All that the Father hath given Me (in our covenant of redemption) shall come unto me.” This, I say, is the original copy, which God has locked up in the cabinet of his secret purposes. The second

I have also shewn you, that by faith alone in the death and merits of Christ, is the knowledge of salvation received--and even *this faith* does not originate from yourselves, it is the gift of God--that without being sensible of the sinful state of your nature--repentance--self condemnation--sorrow for sin--yea without being born again, it is impossible for you to enter into the kingdom of Heaven--that neither a constant attendance upon God's word--nor an outward reformation, can constitute you heaven-born souls, i. e. real Christians; that there must be a change in your hearts, effected by the Spirit of the living God--and whoever are strangers to this, are as yet, totally unacquainted with vital religion, nor have such yet advanced one step in the saving knowledge of Christ. But on the other hand, for the encouragement of those, who see and feel themselves vile, hell-deserving sinners; I have pointed out to you Jesus, the sinners friend, exhorted you to repair to the throne of grace immediately, just as you are, not to stay a moment under a pretence of making yourselves better, or more fit for Christ--for were you to stay fifty years longer, yea to eternity, you could never make yourselves one hair's-breadth better, but worse abundantly. Therefore go confessing your manifold sins, and praying from the bottom of your heart, "God be merciful to me a guilty sinner--O Lord save ere I perish for ever and ever." Such seeking souls shall certainly find an open door of mercy. Some of you, I hope, see at least the *necessity* of these things. You I would warn particularly against four things.

copy is in our Bibles; and God has sent every gospel minister with a copy in his hand, for you to seal and sign it with the hand of faith: for until you so subscribe to it, you can never be assured that your names are in the original; and consequently cannot live that life of faith which God's faithful children do here below, being grounded on the sure foundation, 1 Cor. iii.

I. The deceitfulness of your own evil hearts; “ Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, &c.” In short, there is not an evil in or out of hell, but is to be found in this desperate wicked heart; Solomon declares every one that trusts his own heart is *a fool*.

II. Beware of your old darling, predominant sins, whatever they were. When you are off your watch, Satan will present to your views, mantled over in an angelic garb, those sins which at other times you would know and avoid.

III. Your old companions in sin will struggle as hard to bring your soul back again from the ways of religion, as the devil did for the body of Moses. Many young converts have been retarded in their spiritual journey—and long detained in trouble and sorrow by this means. Therefore avoid their company as much as possible, and when you are providentially called into it, which many of you are in your daily labour, let it be evident by your life, conversation and behaviour, that you are *renewed* men!

IV. You must expect many disagreeable salutations from your irreligious, scoffing neighbours. Wonder not if they speak all manner of evil against you; yea, and do you as much mischief too as they can. Our Lord told us of these things long ago—therefore think them not strange when they come. Let no provocation be given unto them on your part—render not evil for evil, nor railing for railing: on the contrary, be ready to do them every good office in your power, and so return love for hatred. Yet remember you are not to be laughed out of your religion by them: be not afraid of the devil’s children, they have neither truth or reason on their side; you have both. Be not ashamed to own you are a follower of Jesus; to be ashamed of Jesus is dreadful—Christ declares, “ Whosoever is ashamed of Me before men, of him will I be ashamed before my Father and his holy angels.”

You

You see how faithful and bold the ungodly are in the service of their master the devil, as you were not long ago. And shall you be less bold in the service and profession of the Lord Jesus Christ? God forbid: go on, your cause is good; your victory is sure: for all who in the strength of Jesus fight, are more than conquerors over *Death, Hell, and the Grave.*

For your assistance in rightly hearing and improving the public ministry of the word, I commend to your hands the following Rules. They are short, plain and easy to be understood and retained. Read them over and over, until you are thoroughly acquainted with their substance, and the end they point. Then, if you understand and approve of them, pray to God to bless them to you for your good.—And even then do not cast them upon shelves among your dusty lumber, but let them lie in your Bibles, and read at least some part of them every week: and if you are in any degree profited by them, neither your money in purchasing, nor your time in perusing, will be lost.

J. D U N C A N.

TADLEY.

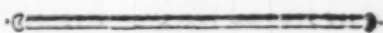
R U L E S



R U L E S

F O R

Hearing the WORD of GOD with
CERTAIN and SAVING BENEFIT.



Before you Hear.

D I R E C T I O N I.

PRAY for a blessing before you leave your own houses; and while in the way to the house of God, seriously think what blessing you particularly want—pray God to direct the minister's heart and lips to that may suit your state. Ask and you shall receive; hearty prayer ever did and ever will prevail with Heaven; especially when it is for the best gifts. But, by not asking a blessing, you deserve a curse: because you do virtually tell God, either that you need not his Spirit, or that you desire not the saving efficacy of his Word. Neglect of prayer will ruin the best hearer; but a holy use of it will save the worst.

DIRECT. II. *Guard against distractions in hearing.* Wrath, lust and sinful passions, will take away your heart at sermons: but a constant, cordial watch, and fight against them, will destroy those destroyers. God will let no soul be devoured by them, that is diligent to keep from them: though on the other hand, souls that do little to prevent them, shall be plagued with them. Divine Grace will not encourage your sinful Negligence; no, but the temptations which overtake you wilfully, shall overtake you wofully. O Christian! believe the sad experience of thousands, and examine thy own.

DIRECT.

DIRECT. III. *Value the word, and the preaching of it, and thank God for them both.* Honor them for God's sake, and God will honor and bless you for his Son's sake, and for his promise sake : God is so free of his blessing on both, that he lets no man who highly prizeth it, go without it : you may highly prize gold and silver, and yet go without them both ; but the rich treasure of the Gospel is certainly your own, if you can but supremely value it. If you despise it, blame yourselves that you are not enriched with it. God will never throw his inestimable pearl unto ungrateful swine : swine that will not give so much as thanks for the Pearl of greatest price.

DIRECT. IV. *Acquaint yourselves well with the ends and uses of the word of God.* Read good books, and especially the Bible frequently, with seriousness and prayer ; and what remains still too deep for your understanding to comprehend, repair with to your minister ; it is his business to instruct and privately to resolve your doubts *in the parlour, as much as publickly to teach in the pulpit* : and it is *your* business to know as well as *his* the will and purposes of God in his revealed word. The four comprehensive ends of his word are, 1. To convince of Sin. 2. To convert unto Jesus Christ. 3. To confirm in Grace. 4. To direct and comfort in Obedience. Labour to understand *these*, and muse upon them frequently. Come to Sermons for *these*, and you shall not go from Sermons without them. But remember, God hath not pleasure in fools ; and if you come to hear for you know not what, it is not to be wondered at, if you go away fools, as ye went.

DIRECT. V. *Never forget God's promise of blessing on dutiful hearing.* "Hear and your souls shall live," says the God of Truth, who cannot lie. This is a promise of the Almighty ; keep it as the apple of your eye. It will do your heart good to think that God hath engaged to bless your hearing ; for his FREE GRACE is also BOUND GRACE, bound by word
and

and *oath*. This will give you holy boldness, to which God always giveth happy welcome : but the want of this in your mind, will keep it full of painful doubts and slavish fears. Without a miracle of Grace, it will hold you fearful and unbelieving ; that is, perishing.

DIRECT. VI. *Honor your advocate Jesus by frequently applying to him for advice in all difficult cases.* CHRIST is your advocate, and by him alone can you find acceptance with God. Earnestly cry to the HOLY SPIRIT, by whom alone you can receive any effectual assistance, to perform any good, or avoid the numerous evils that stand in your way. No man ever thus honored the SON and SPIRIT, and went without the full blessing of the word. Without our Intercessor in Heaven, and our Intercessor in our hearts, we can profitably do nothing ; but with them we can do all things prosperously. Therefore are so many gospel sermons every where so lost, because this dependance on Christ and on his Spirit are scarce any where to be found. May God fix this on thy heart, O reader ! then shall not the ministers of Christ have such occasion to weep in secret, that they have spent their strength and labour in vain.

DIRECT. VII. *Remember that hearing the word of God, will either prove the savour of life, or death unto your precious souls. It will cure you or kill you. It will give life to life, or death to death.* Give yourselves this preparatory sermon before you come to hear mine. A gospel minister's sermons soften or harden hearers souls ; they never leave you in the same degree of good or evil that they find you. Such thoughts as these exercising your minds in your way to the house of God, are generally foretastes of some blessed visits from the Master of assemblies.

Rules in hearing the Word preached.

DIRECTION I.

APPROVE plainness and holy warmth in the preaching of the word. Not only excuse and endure, but approve

approve and prefer such preaching. You like best the physician that heals best, and the counsellor that best brings you to peace and quiet possession of your inheritance, although they do not address you in an elegant style, or compliment you with the usual formalities and ceremonies of the times; but rather reprove and chastise your mischievous folly with needful severity. Be as wise for your souls as for your bodies and estates. God heals the sick souls that prefer and use his own prescribed plain medicines: but nice and peevish ones, that loath his manna and must have quails; that are disgusted at his sharp word, and rather chuse to be entertained with the smooth words of man; must die in their pride and folly. Where preachers are but MUSICIANS, churches are but GOLGOTHAS.

DIRECT. II. *Receive the word preached by faithful ministers, as from God himself. Originally, even his whole sermons, as well as his text. Materially, the matter and sense of them is from God. Institutively, for by God's command they are spoken to you. Advantageously, for through the loving kindness of Christ Jesus, you may receive more profit by the public preaching of the word to your hearts, than by barely reading of the Holy Scriptures. Gospel sermons are comments upon God's word by his own special appointment; to which comment God hath annexed a sure promise of great blessings; for faith comes by hearing these comments, i. e. sermons. "He that heareth you, heareth me," said Christ to the first preachers he sent, and so he says to all he sends to this day. Receive every gospel sermon as preached by Christ himself, and doubt not but Christ will bless it to your souls. But, O reader, remember, if thou take the substance, as well as the words of a sermon, for ours, thy mistake will be to thee a deadly loss!*

DIRECT. III. *Mix much prayer with your hearing. Souls are spirits, their motions swifter than the sun's; they can, and they ought to do two things at once; ejaculation*

ejaculation helps attention, and not hinders it. Bread and salt must be in every meal, and a short warm prayer in every duty. Let your hearts cry out at every truth delivered, *O Lord, fix this truth on my soul!* At every precept and promise, *Good God, help me to obey this command, and rely on this promise!* At every reproof, *Glorious Spirit, convince and humble me for this sin, and lead me to Christ for pardon!* &c. Such praying hearers never lose their labour. But woe to them, who, though at sermon-time, they are not deaf, are dumb, whose hearts speak not to this purpose, while their ears hear. They who love not the king, pay but little attention to the ambassador's declaration.

DIRECT. IV. *Apply your own souls to what the preacher saith to all.* Labour to understand his subject and doctrine for yourself. Ministers are nurses, sermons are breasts, God's word is milk, hearers are the children, and right hearing is receiving the milk into one's own soul. What another receives and applies will not nourish thee. Say this of every DOCTRINE, *This is my lesson, I will learn it.* Of every COMMAND, *This is my duty, I will do it.* Of every PROMISE, *This is my engagement, this is my meat and drink, my soul shall rely and feed thereon.* Who ever missed of life, from the word of life, that so applied it to themselves? Who did ever thus receive and not grow by the gospel milk? Blessed are they who thus attend sermons; while all are certainly starving who do not thus feed upon the soul-nourishing word, but reject and disdain every gospel dainty that can be set before them. And of all the damned in hell, they are the most miserable, who have starved themselves to spiritual death, when they might have feasted on the marriage supper of the Lamb through all eternity.

DIRECT. V. *Express your reverence of God in every sermon you hear.* God is specially present in heaven and at gospel sermons. If you believe this, shew it to God and your consciences, by holy thoughts, and holy affections; to the congregation, by your well composed

composed countenances, and becoming gestures. Your bodies are God's as well as your souls ; if you glorify him not with both, you glorify him with neither. God lays no hard impositions on aged, sickly, weak bodies ; but he requires others to give him reverent postures in his worship : gadding eyes are impudent publishers of profane rambling hearts ; and of those fools, whereof one makes many, put off your shoes, and keep them off while you are on holy ground : that is, be reverent in soul and body. Irreverence at sermons is a public call to God for damnation upon your souls before hundreds of witnesses, and without the grace of God preventing you, will certainly be your unhappy condition.

DIRECT. VI. *Honor the preacher as a man of God, but no more.* God styles a minister by that name ; and God's names are the most proper and instructive. A minister is but a man, therefore do not adore him as a God. Let him be thy minister, so that Christ may still be thy *supreme* shepherd and bishop. He is but a man, expect therefore and bear with his infirmities, and pray earnestly for God's assistance to him. He is but a man, therefore pin not thy faith to his sleeve, but exercise thy own sense, and pray for the direction of God's Holy Spirit. Yet remember he is a man of God ; i. e. one that is zealous and laborious for the good of immortal souls—faithful in declaring the free sovereign grace of God, and the everlasting love of the adorable Jesus from all eternity to ruined man. If not, it is at the peril of thy soul thou waste thy time in hearing him. But if he is one who declares the whole counsel of God, and rightly divides the word of truth, while thou art hearing him, consider, this man has received the Holy Ghost : a man whom Christ hath qualified and commissioned under himself, to be a saviour of thy soul and all that hear him. Despise him not, else he cannot profit thy soul : do not adore him, else it is ten thousand to one but God may suffer him to
prove

prove a snare to thee. Thou wilt profit by him when thou hearest him, as he really is, an AMBASSADOR OF GOD, a MESSENGER OF CHRIST, an OVERSEER OF GOD'S FLOCK, so made by the Holy Ghost. But woe! woe! be to thee, if thou follow him either as a GOD, or a COMMON MAN. The gospel pronounceth no blessings upon either the *Superstitious*, or the *Prophane*.

DIRECT. VII. *Strive to remember as much of the Sermon as you can.* While you are hearing, note down in your mind every *Head*, *Subdivision*, and in particular the *Introduction* and *Application*—especially catch hold of and retain the doctrine or main drift of the preacher in his sermon. It may not be amiss to add also, every curious, striking, or historical remark: these I have often found useful notes to assist the memory, to what either went before, or immediately followed after. But above all, cry earnestly to God, deeply to impress your heart with what you hear: this is the best means for strengthening the memory that I know.

However nature, sickness or age, may have incurably wounded your memories, remember God is gracious; he will accept an unfeigned good-will for the very deed. His Spirit shall be a never failing remembrancer to such as against their wills, and against their endeavours, are forgetful. He will never call *them* forgetful hearers, that strain and strive, and do their best to remember. Not so will the Almighty deal with you, O ye thoughtless, careless, unconcerned, Christless ones! O ye *unprofitable servants*! read and tremble at that awful declaration of our Lord's, *Depart ye Cursed, &c.* O sluggard, Heaven is no hive for drones! Ignorance is a curse, and if ignorance be thy choice, it will as surely be thy destruction.

After

After bearing God's Word.

DIRECTION I.

TAKE earnest heed that you do not let slip what you have received. Your memories are the great servants of your FAITH, HOPE and OBEDIENCE: and they are but imperfectly sanctified; they are too much like the grates that let the clean water pass, and hold the filth and mud. If you take but little pains with them, you will have but very bad services from them. The best ground will never preserve the seed, if no care is taken to drive off the fowls that will come to eat it up; and if labour is not bestowed to harrow it in. Therefore, they who thus endeavour, their labours shall not be in vain in the Lord. But if you are lame, and will not use crutches; if you complain of your memories, and yet will not talk to yourselves—endeavour to repeat in your families what you can—hear every one in the house repeat some of it, however small—think it over in your minds, when you return from the house of God (not talk it away betwixt sermons about indifferent things) and pray the Spirit to be your remembrancer; you must take to your sorrow, what you receive from your sloth. Remember, the devil cannot rob you of a sermon against your wills; nor will God keep a sermon in your minds without your wills.

DIRECT. II. *Let your thanks be returned after every sermon heard.* Thanks and praise are God's dearly beloved; the end of all his works; the end of your BEINGS, your REDEMPTION, your GOSPEL CALLS; of all ORDINANCES you attend, of all PROVIDENCES you meet with in life, whether prosperous or adverse. It is in HELL only there are no thanksgivings and praise—in HEAVEN nothing else. Nothing delighteth God so much as these, and for nothing on this earth doth God expect these, more than for his preached Gospel: when it is said, "He giveth his word," it is immediately added, "Praise
" ye

“ ye the Lord.” And we are told this praise shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock ; i. e. better than any external sacrifice. If unprofitableness by the word doth not drive away thankfulness, thankfulness for the word will certainly drive away unprofitableness. Let your thanks be more than verbal, and your profit shall be sure. It shall appear to all men. But as long as you hear unthankfully, you must remain unprofitable and unholy. *Ingratitude* of all sins is most odious in the sight of God ; yea, and the most destructive to thy own soul, for it turns honey into gall, and physic into poison. It renders those possessed with it, near a-kin to them who said of Christ, “ He is a Samaritan, and hath a devil.”

DIRECT. III. *Lament your sins in hearing, and pray for grace to act faith on Christ for pardon.* Abundance of dross is in all our gold. Iniquity abounds in our holy things. The holiest of them all need a thousand pardons, and deserve our deepest blushes. For your own soul's sake, do not flatter yourselves ; repenting and believing are not indifferent things, or acts of meer Christian liberty, but indispenfible duties. They must go before the seal of your pardon. And believe it, God is incensed against sin, whoever it be that sinneth, let the sin be great or small. Although God delighteth to be kind, yet he will not spare the *sinner*, although it be one of his own darling sons : therefore, stand in awe, and sin not. Would you profit by the sermons you hear, then follow the particulars of it, that respect yourself, with the tears of repentance, and prayers of faith. Then will God give you profits, with measure pressed down and running over. If you are too proud for this direction, and so continue, your pride will make you fall into the endless regions of burning torments and black despair ; for pride goes before a fall.

DIRECT. IV. *Examine with humble diligence what in hearing appeared to you as doubtful.* Suspect your own understandings more than your minister's, but lean

lean not rashly on your own, nor idolatroufly on his. If his doctrine be erroneous, it will become poison in thy soul, therefore swallow not what you suspect. The most noble hearers try all doctrine by the holy Scriptures. Good children ask their parents advice, wise women ask their husbands, and the wife of all sorts their ministers, and intreat them to clear up their doctrine by God's own word. Thus do, and whoever are barren hearers, you shall be fruitful. God never fails to teach those souls who are careful to avoid error and imbibe nothing but truth. O happy church ! where the *Minister's Lips* preserve knowledge, and the *People* receive it into their hearts. But if self-conceited drones, and contentious cavillers, live Idiots, they must die without the saving knowledge of God : for his curse rests on the idle, and he resisteth the proud.

DIRECT. V. *Prove your state and condition by every gospel sermon.* You cannot try too often those things of which you cannot be too certain. You are either true believers, and alive to God, or unbelievers, and dead in sin and misery. You are either strong men in Christ, or babes ; but let your case be what it will, it is a poor sermon, indeed, by which you can learn nothing.

With *God's blessing* upon your conscientious care to make the best use of all helps, you need not fear. When God commands you to try and prove yourselves, it is not without a promised blessing, to encourage you so to do. God ever enricheth those hearers, who use sermons as scales to weigh, and touchstones to try their souls. But as for the presumptuous, who like the Laodiceans, think they are rich in grace, and stand in need of nothing, though they are poor and miserable, and blind and naked : and the despairing, who conclude there is no mercy for them ; therefore, they chuse to take a full living in iniquity, and so put the word of God far from them. What hope is there of these ? The great
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God will *condemn such* by his word, who will not *judge themselves* by it. If you will not make the word of God a light unto your feet, he will make it a fire to devour thee.

DIRECT. VI. *Carry on your knowledge, memory, and every good purpose, unto practice.* Christian divinity is an art of *doing*, as well as *knowing* the will of God. It teacheth *living unto God* by its word, sacraments, faith, repentance, &c. God gave his Son, and sent down his Spirit to procure him a people, zealous of good *works*, as well as good *words*. Much *fruit* (and not many *fair leaves*) it is that glorifieth God. It is the hearer, rich in good works, that God will glorify. I have a warrant from the great God to tell you, that if you hear his word and keep it, you shall be honored of God in heaven before his holy angels. Be diligent, and (faithful too) in the little that ye do know, and remember he giveth more grace. But from him that practiseth not what he knows, from him shall be taken even that little light which he hath; and he being bound hand and foot, cast into outer darkness. These are the worst of monsters, who speak as with cloven tongues, and yet, as negroes, are no where white but in the mouth.

DIRECT. VII. *Teach your relations at home what God teacheth you at Sermons.* God will never forfeit his name of Love, nor fail to reward *charity*, and especially *soul-charity*. The devil's proverb is, "The free shall not be fat." But God's proverb is, "The liberal soul shall be made fat." And he that watereth others, shall be watered. God will hide nothing from an Abraham, because he will instruct all his family: do you so likewise, and you shall be so taught of God, so as you have not been heretofore. Drop divine truths upon them, and God shall make sermons like rich showers upon thy soul. But if you do not feed them, God will starve you. God is a great lover of children, and our children are *his* more than *ours*; nor can you anger God more, than by

by neglect of these his children. You may be ever learning, and never come to the saving knowledge of the truth, until you make conscience of communicating what you know of God to your household. Teach others, and God will teach you; comfort them, and God will multiply comforts to you. Be not shy and bashful, but be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

When these few Rules shall be observed, the ministers of Christ shall become happy fathers, and joyful nurses of heaven-born souls. Then shall the bed of Christ be green in our happy assemblies. The young kids shall feed beside the shepherds tents, and rest at noon by the flocks of thy companions. Our sermons then shall no more be dry breasts. Our conversation shall be in heaven, and heaven shall be begun on earth. Many shall fear and wonder, and great horror shall seize on the souls of the scorers; while we, like the primitive Christians, shall praise our God with joyful lips, and have favour of all the people: then shall the word of the Lord run and be glorified, “and God, even our God, give us “his blessing.”

Which may God of his infinite mercy grant, for Jesus Christ's sake; and may the Lord impress these few Rules on every Reader's heart, by the Holy Spirit's power! Amen, and Amen.

F I N I S.

